

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 05106 251003 Z

20

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 GAC-01 RSR-01

DOTE-00 /102 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3395

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E. O. 11652: (N/ A)

TAGS: ILAB/ JA

SUBJECT: COMMUTERS RIOT OVER R. R. SLBPDOWN

REF: (A) STATE 4908; (B) A-313

SUMMARY: RIOTS BROKE OUT AT 26 JAPAN NATIONAL RAILWAY (JNR) STATIONS IN AND AROUND TOKYO. THE RIOTERS SMASHED WINDOWS, LOOTED TICKET VENDING MACHINES AND, AT AKABANE STATION, SET FIRE TO A TRAIN. THE DAMAGE WAS SO EXTENSIVE THAT ALTHOUGH THE TWO JNR UNIONS AGREED TO TEMPORARILY END THE UNION GO- SLOW CAMPAIGNS, RAIL SERVICE ON SIX MAJOR COMMUTER LINES WAS SUSPENDED THROUGH NOON OF APRIL 26. THE UNIONS, HOWEVER, HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WILL GO AHEAD WITH THEIR SCHEDULED 72- HOUR GENERAL STRIKE BEGIN CNG APRIL 27. THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH THUS FAR HAS REFUSED UNION DEMANDS FOR A " SUMMIT MEETING" BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER TANAKA AND SOHYO PRESIDENT ICHIKAWA, CALLED AN EMERGENCY CABINET MEETING WEDNESDAY MORNING, BUT AT ITS CONCLUSION CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY NIKAI DO, WHILE STATING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE " EVERY EFFORT" TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION", SAID THAT THE ILLEGAL WORK STOPPAGES WERE " A CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY". A LAST MINUTE MEETING BETWEEN LABOR MINISTER KATO AND ICHIKAWA ENDED IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 TOKYO 05106 251003 Z

RUPTURE WHEN ICHIKAWA REFUSED TO HEED KATO'S REQUEST FOR A CANCELLATION OF THE GENERAL STRIKE. A MASSIVE TRANSPORTATION WALKOUT, THEREFORE, APPEARS TO BE UNAVOIDABLE. END SUMMARY

1. THE DISTURBANCES, WHICH EXCEEDED LAST MONTH'S OUTBREAK AT AGEO STATION (REF B) BEGAN AT ABOUT 8:30 TUESDAY NIGHT AT AKABANE STATION WHEN, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, AN EXPRESS TRAIN WAS SWITCHED TO A LOCAL. TEMPERERS WERE SHORTENED BY A DRIVING RAIN AND PENT UP FRUSTRATIONS OVER THE PROTRACTED UNION GO-SLOW CAMPAIGNS WERE VENTED. THE RESULTING SUSPENSION OF SERVICE CAUSED SIMILAR ERUPTIONS AT OTHER MAJOR TOKYO STATIONS, COMPLETE WITH PROPERTY DESTRUCTION, ARSON AND LOOTING.

IN THE WAKE OF THE VIOLENCE, KOKURO AND DORO AGREED AT 9:30 P. M. TUESDAY NIGHT TO A JNR MANAGEMENT APPEAL TO RESTORE SERVICE BUT BY THIS TIME CHAOS WAS SO WIDESPREAD THAT FEW TRAINS ACTUALLY RAN. THIS LEFT AN ESTIMATED 35,000 COMMUTERS STRANDED AT VARIOUS TOKYO STATIONS. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT 18,000 POLICE WERE CALLED OUT BUT ONLY 35 PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED. ALTHOUGH SOME RAILROAD EMPLOYEES WERE "ROUGHED UP" THERE ARE NO REPORTS OF SERIOUS INJURIES.

2. REACTION TO THE INCIDENT HAS GENERALLY BEEN ALONG PARTISAN LINES. THE TWO RAILROAD UNIONS, KOKURO AND DORO, WHILE REPORTEDLY "SHAKEN BY THE VIOLENCE AND AGREEABLE TO MODIFYING THEIR "GO-SLOW CAMPAIGN SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 26, HAVE REAFFIRMED THEIR INTENTION OF GOING THROUGH WITH THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE 72-HOUR TRANSPORTATION, POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS STRIKE. THE JOINT SPRING STRUGGLE COMMITTEE MADESLP OF SOHYO AND CHURITSOROREN UNIONS, WHILE CALLING ON THE JNR UNIONS TO COOPERATE WITH MANAGEMENT IN RESTORING SERVICE ON APRIL TWENTY, BLAMED "RIGHTISTS" FOR CAUSING THE RIOTS (THE POLICE, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, HAVE FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF SUCH ACTIVITY AND DESCRIBE THE INCIDENTS AS SPONTANEOUS). MINORITY POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE BLAMED THE GOVERNMENT FOR REFUSING TO SETTLE THE "BASIC ISSUES" (RESTORATION OF THE RIGHT TO STRIKE TO PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS, LEGISLATION FOR HIGHER PENSIONS AMONG OTHERS AND CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO AGREE TO THE TANAKA- ICHIKAWA SUMMIT MEETING. THE GOVERNMENT, IN A STATEMENT BY CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY NIKAI DO FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCY CABINET MEETING, SAID THAT THE REGRETTABLE INCIDENTS WERE "A CLEAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TOKYO 05106 251003 Z

EXPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE'S DISCONTENT OVER THE SLOWDOWNS: AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SETTLE THE PROBLEMS AND AVOID A GENERAL STRIKE. HE SAID THAT THE SCHEDULED 72-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE WOULD HAVE A GREAT EFFECT ON THE PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOOD" AND THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, BUT INDICATED AN UNCOMPROMISING GOVERNMENT POSTURE BY SAYING THAT THE ILLEGAL TACTICS EMPLOYED BY THE RAILROAD UNIONS WERE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED

AND WERE A " CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY". PRESS INTERVIEWS INDICATE THAT THE VICTIMS OF THE STRIKE, THE COMMUTERS, ARE OUTRAGED AT THE GENERAL SITUATION BUT HAVE NOT FOCUSED THEIR ANGER AT ANY PARTICULAR PARTY. MANY SIMPLY STATED THAT THE UNIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO END THE CONFUSION.

3. COMMENT: SNOTH THE UNIONS IANJZ THE GOVERNMENT ARE OBVIOUSLY DISTURBED BY THE VIOLENCE BUT THEY ARE BOTH SO LOCKED INTO HARD POSITIONS THAT A LAST MINUTE STRIKE AVERTING COMPROMISE SEEMS UNLIKELY. SOHYO LEADERSHIP HAS PLAYED UP THE 72- HOUR STRIKE (INVOLVING A NUMBER OF PRIVATE R. R. UNIONS AS WELL AS THE J. QA. R. UNIONS) AS THE STEP THAT WILL FORCE PRIME MINISTER TANAKA TO MEET DIRECTLY WITH SOHYO PRESIDENT ICHIKAWA. UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT AGREES TO SUCH A MEETING, THERE APPEARS TO BE NO FACE- SAVING WAY FOR SOHYO TO BACK DOWN. THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OTHER HAND, WHILE INDICATING THAT SUCH A MEETING MIGHT BE POSSIBLE AFTER THE " GOLDEN WEEK" HOLIDAY (ENDING MAY 6) CANNOT APPEAR TO GIVE IN TO PRESSURE CAUSED BY ILLEGAL UNION ACTIVITY, ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT ACTIVITY IS IN PURSUIT OF " POLITICAL" (NOTABLY RESTORATION OF THE RIGHT TO STRIKE HAO PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS) GOALS. WITH THE MEETING BETWEEN ICHIKAWA AND LABOR MINISTER KATO THIS AFTERNOON ENDING IN RUPTURE AS A RESULT OF ICHIKAWA' S REFUSAL TO CALL OFF THE WALKOUT, TOMORROW' S STRIKE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BEGIN AS SCHEDULED. THE PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER VIOLENCE ARE DIMINISHED, HOWEVER, BY THE FACT THAT A COMPLETE STOPPAGE WILL EITHER KEEP COMMUTERS HOME OR FORCE THEM TO ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION AND THERE WILL BE NO MOB SCENES AT THE STATIONS. IT IS TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THE PRECISE EFFECT THAT LAST NIGHT' S INCIDENTS WILL HAVE ON THE JNR - KOKURO- DORO CONFLICT OR ON THE TACTICS EMPLOYED BY JNR UNIONS IN FUTURE DISPUTES, BUT THE JAPANESE COMMUTER HAS GIVEN NOTICE THAT HIS TOLERANCE IS NOT UNLIMITED.

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